



DIVINE WILL AND PREDESTINATION

In the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah

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CHAPTER ONE

BELIEF IN QADAR (PREDESTINATION) IS ONE OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FAITH (UŞOOL AL-EEMAAN)

Belief in *qadar* (predestination), is one of the basic principles of faith, without which a person's belief is incomplete. Muslim, narrated from 'Umar ibn al-Khatta'ab (رضي الله عنه), describing how Jibreel (Gabriel) (عليه السلام), questioned the Messenger (ﷺ) about *eemaan* (belief), in reply he (ﷺ) said:

"It (*eemaan*) is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and to believe in divine destiny (*qadar*), both the good and the evil thereof." He (i.e., Jibreel) said: "You have spoken rightly."¹

There are many texts which speak of the *qadar* of Allah or enjoin belief in *qadar*. These texts include the *aayaat* (verses):

﴿ إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ ﴾

«Verily, We have created all things with *Qadar* [Divine Preordainments of all things before their creation as written in the Book of Decrees - *Al-Lauh al-Mahfooz*].»

(*Qur'an* 54: 49)

﴿ ... وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُورًا ﴾

«...And the Command of Allah is a decree determined.»

(*Qur'an* 33: 38)

¹ *Sharh an-Nawawi 'ala Muslim*, 1/157.

﴿... وَلَكِنْ لِّيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا ...﴾ (٤٢)

﴿...but [you met] that Allah might accomplish a matter already ordained [in His Knowledge]...﴾ (Qur'an 8: 42)

﴿... وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ مَقْدِيرًا ...﴾ (٢)

﴿...He has created everything, and has measured it exactly according to its due measurements.﴾

(Qur'an 25: 2)

﴿سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى ۝ الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى ۝ وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى ۝﴾ (٢١)

﴿Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High, Who has created [everything], and then proportioned it. And Who has measured [preordainments for everything even to be blessed or wretched]; and then guided [i.e. showed mankind the right as well as the wrong paths, and guided the animals to pasture].﴾ (Qur'an 87: 1-3)

Muslim narrated in his *Shaheeh* that Taawoos said: "I met some people from among the Companions of the Messenger of Allah who said that everything happens by *qadar*. He said, I heard 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar say: everything happens by *qadar*, even helplessness and resourcefulness, or resourcefulness and helplessness."²

Muslim also narrated that Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said: "The *mushrikeen* (polytheists) of Quraysh came and debated about *qadar* with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), then the following words were revealed:

﴿يَوْمَ يُسْحَبُونَ فِي النَّارِ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ ذُوقُوا مَسَّ سَقَرَ ۝ إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ﴾

﴿يَقْدِرُ ۝﴾ (٤٩)

﴿The Day they will be dragged on their faces into the Fire [it will be said to them]: "Taste you the touch of Hell!" Verily, We have created all things with *Qadar* [Divine Preordainments of all things before their creation as written in the Book of Decrees - *Al-Lauh al-Mahfuz*].﴾ (Qur'an 54: 48-49).³

There are many similar texts. The texts which speak of the knowledge, power, will and creation of Allah also refer to His decree (*qadar*). Belief in *qadar* also includes belief in Allah's knowledge, will and creation, as we will see below, supported by the relevant texts.

From the linguistic point of view - as stated by Raaghib al-Aṣḥaani, according to the report narrated from him by Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalaani - the word *qadar* implies ability or power, and the object of that ability, which exists in the knowledge of Allah.⁴

Allah, the Almighty, has absolute power (*qudrah*), and His power is not lacking in any way whatsoever. Among His Names - may He be blessed and exalted - are the names *Al-Qaadir* (the Able), *Al-Qadeer* (the All-Powerful) and *Al-Muqtadir* (Omnipotent, Able to do everything). Power (*Qudrah*) is one of His Attributes.

Al-Qaadir is the active participle of the verb *qadara yaqdiru*. *Al-Qadeer* is a more intensive form, meaning the One Who does what He wants, in accordance with His wisdom, no more and no less. Therefore no one deserves to be described with this name except Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. Allah (ﷻ), says:

﴿... بَلَىٰ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝﴾ (٢٢)

² Muslim, 4/2045, No. 2655.

³ Muslim, 4/2046, No. 2656; Tirmidhi, 3/229.

⁴ *Fath al-Baari*, 11/477.

Elsewhere he said:

“The definitive proof of the texts of the Qur’an and Sunnah, and the consensus (*ijmaa*‘) of the *Ṣaḥābah* (the Companions) and the prominent figures among the earlier and later generations, overwhelmingly support one another to prove the *qadar* of Allah.”⁹

Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The opinion of all the *salaf* is that all things happen by the decree of Allah, as Allah (ﷻ), says:

﴿وَأَن مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ﴾

“And there is not a thing, but with Us are the stores thereof. And We send it not down except in a known measure [*qadar*].” (Qur’an 15: 21).¹⁰

⁹ *Sharḥ an-Nawawī ‘ala Muslim*, 2/155.

¹⁰ *Fath al-Baari*, 11/478.

CHAPTER TWO

A GLANCE AT THE HISTORY OF QADAR (PREDESTINATION)

Belief in *qadar* (predestination) is one of the basic principles of faith. The Qur’an and Sunnah explain the concept of *qadar* (predestination), and the Messenger (ﷺ) stated that doing deeds and taking the means to an end is part of *qadar* and does not contradict this idea. He warned his ummah against those who do not believe in *qadar*, or who use *qadar* as a pretext to oppose the commandments of Islam.

The Messenger (ﷺ) became very angry when he came out one day and found his Companions debating about *qadar*; he was so angry that his face turned red as if a pomegranate had been squeezed over his face. He said:

“Is this what you have been commanded to do? Is this why I was sent to you? The people who came before you were destroyed when they disputed about this matter. I urge you not to dispute about this.”¹

The *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) (may Allah be pleased with them) responded to the urging and direction of their Prophet. It is not known that any of them debated about *qadar* (predestination), either during his lifetime or after he died.

It has not been narrated that any of the Muslims debated about *qadar* during the time of the Rightly Guided *Khulafa* (Caliphs) Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmaan (may Allah be pleased with them all). All that has been transmitted is that Abu ‘Ubaydah ‘Aamir ibn al-Jarraah

¹ Tirmidhi, 2/223.

objected to the fact that 'Umar went back with the people and did not enter Syria when the plague spread there. He said to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb: "O' *Ameer al-Mu'mineen*, are you running away from the decree (*qadar*) of Allah?"

'Umar said, "If only someone other than you had said this, O' Abu 'Ubaydah! Yes, we are running away from the decree of Allah towards the decree of Allah. Do you not see that if you had a camel and you came to a valley where there were two patches of land, one green and fertile, and the other dry and barren, if you let it graze in the green land, you do so by the decree of Allah, and if you let it graze in the dry land, you do so by the decree of Allah."²

Laalkaa'i narrated that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb addressed the people in Al-Jaabiyah (in Syria) and said: "Whomever Allah sends astray, no one can guide him." There was a Christian priest in front of him, who said, "Allah does not send anyone astray." When 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb repeated his statement, the priest started to brush his garment as an expression of his objection to 'Umar's words.

After his words had been translated to him, 'Umar said: "You are lying, O' enemy of Allah! For Allah has indeed created you, and Allah has sent you astray, then He will cause you to die, and will send you to Hell, *in sha Allah*... Allah created His creation, and when He created Adam, He spread out his progeny in His hand, and decreed who would be the people of Paradise and what they would do, and who would be the people of Hell and what they would do. Then He said, 'These are for this, and these are for this.' And the people dispersed with no dispute concerning *qadar*."³

² Bukhari. See *Fath al-Baari*, 10/179, hadith no. 5729.

³ *Sharḥ Uṣool I'tiqaad Ahl as-Sunnah* by Al-Laalkaa'i, 3/659.

The first person to discuss *qadar* was a man from among the people of Baṣrah, a grocer called Sansawayh. Al-Awzaa'i said, "The first person to speak about *qadar* was a man from 'Iraq called Sawsan. He was a Christian who became Muslim, then he went back to Christianity. Ma'bad al-Juhani learned from him, and Gheelaan learned from Ma'bad."⁴

Yoonus ibn 'Ubayd said: "I came to Baṣrah and there were no *Qadaris* there except for Sansawayh and Ma'bad al-Juhani, and another accursed individual from Bani 'Awaafah."⁵

Muslim narrated that Buraydah ibn Yaḥyaa ibn Ya'mar said: "The first person who spoke about *qadar* in Baṣrah was Ma'bad al-Juhani." Buraydah mentioned in his hadith that Ma'bad and those who were with him claimed that there was no *qadar*, and that everything happened without being decreed.⁶

The *Ṣaḥaabah* (Companions) who were still alive at this time, such as 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Ibn 'Abbaas, Waathilah ibn al-Asqa', Jaabir ibn 'Abdullah, Abu Hurayrah and Anas ibn Maalik launched a war against the people who held this opinion.⁷ This opinion was later adopted from Ma'bad by the leaders of the *Mu'tazilah*, such as Waaṣil ibn 'Aṭaa', 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd and Gheelaan ad-Dimashqi.

Waaṣil ibn 'Aṭaa', the leader of the *Mu'tazilah*, claimed that evil could not be attributed to Allah, because Allah is Wise and it could not be right to say that He would want His slaves to do anything different to that which He had commanded, or that He would decree upon them to do anything and then punish them for that. He stated in

⁴ *Sharḥ Uṣool al-I'tiqaad*, 3/750. *Ash-Sharee'ah* by Aajiree, p. 242.

⁵ *Sharḥ Uṣool I'tiqaad Ahl as-Sunnah*, 3/749.

⁶ *Sharḥ an-Nawawi 'ala Muslim*, 1/150.

⁷ *Al-Farq bayna al-Firaq*, p. 19.

objectionable beliefs, and great deviation and misguidance.¹⁴

This belief spread throughout the ummah and was adopted by many worshippers, ascetics and Sufis. If the previous group was akin to the Magians, this group is more like the *mushrikeen* (polytheists) who said:

﴿... لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا ءَابَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ ...﴾



﴿...‘If Allah had willed, we would not have taken partners [in worship] with Him, nor would our fathers, and we would not have forbidden anything [against His Will]’...﴾ (Qur’an 6: 148)

This latter group is worse than the former, because the former respected the commands and prohibitions (of Islam), although they said that people’s actions were not created by Allah. But this (latter) group, although they believed in *qadar*, used it as pretext and evidence to negate the importance of the commands and prohibitions.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Majmoo’ al-Fataawa Shaykh al-Islam*, 8/460; *Al-Milal wan-Nihal* by Shahrastaani, 1/85.

¹⁵ *Aqeedat as-Safaareeni*, 1/306. More information about those who follow this view will be given below.

CHAPTER THREE

DEFINITION OF QADAA (DIVINE WILL) AND QADAR (PREDESTINATION)

1- Definition of Qadar (Predestination)

The root of *qadar* is *qadara*. In Arabic it is said “*Qadartu ash-shay’a qadran* (or *qadaran*) (I evaluated the thing),” if one knows its quantity and other attributes.¹

In Arabic, *qadar* means decree, judgement, ultimate destiny. *Taqdeer* means to think about how to sort things out.²

In a technical sense, *qadar* means, “something of which there was prior knowledge, one of the things which was written by the Pen when it wrote down everything that was going to happen for the rest of eternity, when Allah decreed the affairs of all His creation and what would happen before it happened. He knew that these things would happen at certain times that were known to Him, and in specific ways, and so things happen in the way that He has decreed.”³

Ibn Hajar said in his definition: “What is meant is that Allah knows how things will be and when they will happen, before He initiates them. Then He creates that which He already knows will happen. Hence everything that happens stems from His knowledge, power and will.”⁴

¹ *Fath al-Baari* by Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalaani, 1/118.

² *Al-Qaamoos al-Muheet* by Al-Fayroozabaadi, p. 591.

³ *Aqeedat as-Safaareeni*, 1/348.

⁴ *Fath al-Baari*, 1/118.

The first pillar: belief in the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah

This great principle is frequently reiterated in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ). The knowledge of Allah encompasses all things: He knows what was and what is yet to come; with regard to that which does not happen, if it were to happen, He knows how it would be. He knows what exists and what does not exist, what is possible and what is impossible.

Allah (ﷻ), knows about His slaves, how long their lives will be, what their provision will be, their circumstances, their movements, whether they are doomed or blessed. He knows who among them are the people of Paradise and who are the people of Hell, from before the time when He created them, and created the heavens and the earth.

All of this is connected to His having knowledge and to the fact that He is the All-Knowing, All-Aware, All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

Allah (ﷻ), says:

﴿هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلِيمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ...﴾ (١)

«He is Allah, beside Whom *Laa ilaaha illa Huwa* [none has the right to be worshipped but He] the All-Knower of the unseen and the seen...» (Qur'an 59: 22)

﴿... أَنْ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا﴾ (٢)

«...that you may know that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah surrounds all things in [His] Knowledge.» (Qur'an 65: 12)

﴿... عَلَيْهِ الْغَيْبُ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

وَلَا أَصْغَرُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرُ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ (٣)

«...the All-Knower of the Unseen... not even the weight of an atom [or a small ant] or less than that or greater escapes His Knowledge in the heavens or in the earth but it is in a Clear Book [*Al-Lauh al-Mahfooz*].»

(Qur'an 34: 3)

﴿إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ﴾ (٤)

«Verily, your Lord! It is He Who knows best who strays from His Way, and He knows best the rightly guided ones.» (Qur'an 6: 117)

﴿... هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ أَنْتُمْ أَجْنَةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ...﴾ (٥)

«...He knows you well when He created you from the earth [Adam], and when you were fetuses in your mothers' wombs...» (Qur'an 53: 32)

Allah (ﷻ), tells us that He knows how things that do not happen would happen if they were to happen:

﴿... وَلَوْ رُدُّوا لَعَادُوا لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ...﴾ (٦)

«...But if they [the *kuffaar* - disbelievers] were returned [to the world], they would certainly revert to that which they were forbidden...» (Qur'an 6: 28)

So Allah knows about these liars, who will wish on the Day of Resurrection that they could go back to the world; He knows that if they were returned, they would go back to their disbelief and misguidance.

Allah, the Exalted, tells us about the *kuffaar* (disbelievers), who cannot bear to hear words of guidance:

﴿وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا لَّأَسْمَعَهُمْ وَلَوْ أَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ﴾ (٧)

The doomed ones are those for whom He wills by His universal *qadari* will that which He does not will by His *shar'ee* will. *Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah* are those who understand the religion of Allah properly, and do not use parts of the Qur'an as evidence against other parts. They know that the rulings of Allah concerning His creation happen according to both types of will. Whoever looks at people's deeds through both lenses (i.e., acknowledges both types of will) has full sight, and whoever looks at the *shar'ee* will without the universal *qadari* will, or vice versa, is one-eyed, as it were, like Quraysh when they said:

﴿... لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا ءَابَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَمًا مِنْ شَيْءٍ ...﴾

«... 'If Allah had willed, we would not have taken partners [in worship] with Him, nor would our fathers, and we would not have forbidden anything [against His Will]'...»

(Qur'an 6: 148)

Allah (ﷻ), says:

﴿... كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّى ذَاقُوا بَأْسَنَا قُلْ هَلْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِنْ

عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ لَنَا إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَخْرُصُونَ﴾

«...Likewise belied those who were before them, [they argued falsely with Allah's Messengers], till they tasted Our Wrath. Say: 'Have you any knowledge [proof] that you can produce before us? Verily, you follow nothing but guess and you do nothing but lie.'»

(Qur'an 6: 148)⁶

⁶ Majmoo' al-Fataawa Shaykh Al-Islam, 8/198.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BENEFITS OF BELIEVING IN QADAR (PREDESTINATION)

We have explained above that the belief in *qadar* (predestination) brought by Islam is free from the weakness, laziness and apathy that have affected a large part of the Muslim ummah down through the ages in the name of belief in *qadar*. The cause of that has been the deviation of the Muslims from a proper understanding of the concept of *qadar* (predestination).

Whoever ponders the belief in *qadar* (predestination) as brought by Islam will find that it has many great benefits which led and still lead to the reform of the individual and of the ummah.

We will describe below some of these benefits of belief in predestination (*qadar*) that we have learned from this study:

1 - Belief in Qadar (Predestination) is a Means of Ridding Oneself of Shirk

Many philosophers have claimed that good comes from Allah, the All-Glorious, and that evil is the creation of other gods; they said this in order to avoid attributing evil to Allah.¹

The Magians (Zoroastrians) claimed that Light was the creator of good, and Darkness was the creator of evil.

Those among this ummah who claimed that Allah does not create the deeds of His slaves, or that He does not create the misguided deeds, are claiming that there are creators other than Allah.

¹ Shifaa' al-'Aleel, p. 14.